

A
S H O R T S T A T E
O F T H E
R E A S O N S
F O R A L A T E
R E S I G N A T I O N .

[Price S I X P E N C E .]

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O F T H E

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[P r i n c e S i x P a n e l .]

A
S H O R T S T A T E
OF THE
R E A S O N S
FOR A L A T E
R E S I G N A T I O N.

TO WHICH ARE ADDED,
OCCASIONAL OBSERVATIONS.

AND A
LETTER to the Right Reverend the BISHOP
of NORWICH.

By J O H N J E B B, M. A.

THE SECOND EDITION.

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M.DCC.LXXV.

S H O R T S T A T E

R E A S O N S

R E P O R T S

TO WHICH ARE ADDED

GOVERNMENTAL DOCUMENTS

AND A

LETTER FROM THE

SECRETARY OF THE

NAVY

IN ANSWER TO A

RESOLUTION OF THE

HOUSE OF COMMONS

PASSED 18TH JANUARY 1845

BY

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A SHORT
STATE, &c.

IN compliance with the suggestions of some worthy persons, who had perused a letter I sent to the Bishop of Norwich previous to my resignation, I have now stated more fully my opinion, respecting the particular point of doctrine, which gave occasion to that measure—I have added some remarks concerning the Spirit of Protestantism, and the Study of the Scriptures, which I hope will not be judged unseasonable—and have subjoined the above-mentioned Letter to my late Diocesan.

I submit my sentiments on these subjects to the candour of the Public. I would not willingly shock the feelings of any pious Christian. Let such reflect, that if I have embraced an opinion respecting the Person of our Saviour, which is chargeable with Heterodoxy, my declaration of such opinion cannot have the remotest tendency to the imposition of it on his conscience. It is in the option of every reader

der to reject it, if in his own apprehension it is abhorrent from the doctrines of the Gospel.

It has been for some time past my firm persuasion, that the doctrine of the TRINITY, as explained in the Creed of Athanasius—as propounded in the thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England—as established in the Liturgy, and further guarded by penal Sanctions in an Act of Parliament passed in the reign of William the third, is equally contrary to sound Reason and the Holy Scriptures. I am fully satisfied that in the Divine Nature there is no PLURALITY of Persons; but that the Almighty Author of the Universe is in the strictest sense of the expression ONE. And I think I have reason to believe, that the present openly avowed adherence of most established churches to a doctrine, which does not appear to have been the sentiment of Christians in the earliest and the purest ages of the church, is not only one of the most powerful obstructions to the conversion of the Mahometans and the Jews; but is also an almost invincible objection to the cordial reception of the Gospel by many serious well-disposed persons, in every rank of life, and in every state in Christendom.

Many worthy persons, who hold the foregoing opinion respecting the Deity, are yet induced to believe that the Prayers of Christians may with propriety

priety be directed to Jesus Christ, and imagine that they may be vindicated in this practice by the command of their Saviour, and the example of his Apostles.

With the utmost charity for those who entertain these sentiments, I profess myself to be of a different opinion. I am stedfastly persuaded that the Creator of the world—the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, who is in the New Testament also stiled the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, is therein represented as the only proper Object of religious adoration.

I nevertheless acknowledge that a very high degree of respect and veneration is due to the character of Jesus, as the anointed Prophet of the Most High—far excelling in Dignity and Power every Prophet who preceded him. I honour him as the SON OF GOD in what appears to me the Scripture acceptance of that term—as the common Lord of Christians—as the appointed Judge of the Living and the Dead. But at the same time I am convinced, that the distance between him and Deity is INFINITE—that Prayer to him is no where commanded in the Scriptures—and, consequently, that the addresses of Christians may with the same propriety be directed to the Virgin Mary, as to the Person of our Lord.

Most

Most of the clauses of the Litany, and some other Prayers and Invocations in the established Liturgy of the Church of England, are immediately addressed to our Saviour—and Honour and Glory are frequently ascribed to the HOLY SPIRIT, as to a DIVINE AGENT, distinct from the Person of the Father; an Idea, in my opinion, not warranted by the Oracles of God.

While I held Preferment, it certainly was my duty to officiate in the established service of the Church. But, oppressed by the consciousness that my sentiments, respecting the Object of devotion, were diametrically opposed to those doctrines, upon which her Form of Worship is founded, I have not been able, for some time past, to discharge this part of my Function without great disquiet. My anxiety hourly increased. I therefore at length found it necessary to embrace the only measure that seemed to promise me tranquillity. The event hath corresponded with my expectation. Having resigned my Preferment, and with it having divested myself of the Character of a Minister in the Church of England, I have recovered that serenity of mind to which I had been long a stranger.

Having now explained the immediate motive of my resignation with sufficient precision, I turn to the consideration of some other points, not wholly unconnected with the present subject.

Religious.

Religious Controversy, in consequence of the long prevalence of System, appearing absolutely necessary to the Establishment of Scriptural Truth, and yet, through the heat and violence of contending Parties, being too frequently productive of dissensions, which dissolve the Bonds of Christian Charity, it may possibly conduce to Edification, if the following circumstances be considered with a due attention *.

It will appear, I trust, to every serious Enquirer into the nature of our Religion, that a Person is strictly intitled to the appellation of a Christian, when, believing in the divine mission of Jesus, he explicitly declares that he submits to his authority in every point of Religious Faith and Doctrine—at the same time expressing a sincere disposition to adorn his profession by a suitable Life and Conversation.

With respect to the nature of the particular doctrines that are contained in the Gospel, it should be esteemed as a fundamental Principle of Protestantism, that every Christian is possessed of an indefeasible

* It is painful to observe, that the present Age has afforded a melancholy Instance of this unchristian Spirit, in the treatment, which the truly candid and very learned Mr. Lindsey has received from some of his opponents.

The worthy Author of the *Remarks* on Mr. Burgh's *scriptural Confutation* has, in his *ADDENDA* to that Tract, ably rebuked this illiberal Spirit; and in both his Publications has evinced, by a train of reasoning which appears to me irresistible, the inconclusiveness of the various objections urged against those substantial arguments, which are advanced in the *APOLOGY* in favour of the proper Unity of God.

sible right of judging for himself, and of avowing that judgment in whatever manner he thinks proper. He is to receive the Comments of learned Persons—the Decisions of Churches—the Decrees of Councils—not as Authorities, but as Helps, if it may so chance, to his more ready comprehension of the Word of God. Where he imagines these Interpretations to be just, he admits them, because his own understanding, aided by sound criticism, approves them. Where he conceives them to be erroneous, conscious of his intire right to interpret for himself, he rejects them—and if he apprehends that the Subject is of sufficient Importance, uniting the spirit of a Luther with the mildness of a Melancthon, he controverts them openly, though countenanced by the concurrent approbation of whole generations of men—and established by the civil Institutions of his country.

The Right, which the Protestant claims for himself, he permits to be exercised by others in the fullest latitude. He treats the Persons of his Brethren, however differing in Sentiment from himself, with that respect and unabated affection, which their station, or his own connection with them demands. And in cases of controversy, he considers their Opinions, and the Arguments by which they are supported, with becoming candour.

Justly

Justly sensible, that the Right of worshipping the great Creator according to that specific Ceremonial, which the Conscience of each man shall approve, is a right inherent in our common Nature—is superior to the control of Laws—and prior to the very existence of civil Society, he extends the Principle of Christian Toleration not only to all Sects and Subdivisions of Christians, but even beyond the Profession of Christianity itself. If he acknowledges, that the Majority of a Nation may justly appropriate a portion of the Public Revenue to the support of a national Form, he denies, that such majority, who approve that form, are thereby entitled to any civil privileges, in preference to the rest of their Brethren—esteeming it to be a fundamental Principle in the Social Compact, that every Person in the community, who accedes to that common Bond of Allegiance, which is the evidence of the union of its members, enjoys an absolute right of rising to the possession of every Honour or Emolument, to which his honest Industry, the favour of his Fellow-citizens, or Royal Inclination can exalt him.

If the Religion, thus established, be declared to be Christian and Protestant, he contends that the Bible, and the Bible only, ought to be considered as an all-sufficient directory to the Preacher in his discourses from the Pulpit: and esteems every Institution, whether civil or ecclesiastical, as an high violation of the original Charter of Christians, which

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requires

requires a declaration of assent to any other Test of Orthodoxy, as a necessary qualification for the office of a Teacher in the Church of Christ.

He is persuaded, that the Love of God and the Love of Man form the Sum and Substance of all true Religion. He venerates the amiable Form of Truth. He is sensible that every material error respecting the Object of Religion is attended with pernicious consequences, and therefore endeavours to exhibit the doctrine of the Gospel in its primæval Purity. Yet, conscious of the frailties of our common nature, and reflecting, that on account of the unjustifiable animosities among Christians about Articles, falsely supposed to be essential to Salvation *, the sacred name of Religion is often itself profaned, he sedulously maintains, that those Persons, who in the integrity of their hearts, and after due inquiry, embrace the Athanasian—the Arian—the Socinian, or any other System, with respect to the person of our Saviour, or the particular tendency of his sufferings to promote the Salvation of mankind, may equally be persuaded of the divine Authority of the Gospel, equally disposed to testify an unreserved obedience to its doctrines, and, by just consequence,

* The following Texts, attentively considered, will I trust sufficiently evince, that Jesus claimed or was intitled to the attention of Mankind, not from the inherent Dignity of his NATURE, but from the attested excellence of his delegated OFFICE. viz. Matt. ix. 8. Lu. iv. 18. 21. xi. 20. Jo. v. 19. 20. 22. 30. 36. viii. 26. 29. xii. 28. xvii. 1. 2. 3. Acts ii. 22. 23. 24. 36. x. 38. 40. xiii. 23. 30. xvii. 30. 31. 2 Cor. v. 18. 19. &c. &c.

consequence, if equally exemplary in the discharge of every Christian Duty, will equally be intitled to Reward.

IT might perhaps be esteemed more methodical, if I prefaced the following Reflections upon the STUDY OF THE SCRIPTURES, with a representation of the necessary connection between the belief of Christianity, and the practice of every Social Virtue. But the natural tendency of the Religion of the Gospel to correct that selfish Spirit, from which every disorder flows in public and in private Life, has been so ably shewn by Divines of all Persuasions, that I shall not employ my own time, or trespass on my Readers patience, by the demonstration of so clear a point.

It may not however be improper to hint, that the outward Pomp and Splendour of RELIGIOUS ESTABLISHMENTS, attended with the solemn affectation of MYSTERY, which more or less prevails in most of them, are seldom productive of any salutary Effects to the real Interests of the Human Race. It is only when the vital Principle of manly Piety, generated by a serious attention to the doctrines of an INTELLIGIBLE Religion, is deeply seated in the WELL-INFORMED MIND, that we can expect the growth of those generous virtues, which diffuse Harmony and Joy over every Scene of social Life, or

prevalence of that Faith, which overcometh the World.

At a Period, when each less valuable mode of Science is rapidly progressive, the State of SCRIPTURAL KNOWLEDGE appears to be very imperfect; although we are possessed of every essential requisite to its improvement.

That we are at this hour, in a great measure, involved in the gloom of Monkish Ignorance, is highly probable from the endless disputations among Christians, upon Points esteemed fundamental; and from the manner in which we generally conduct ourselves in the investigation of Religious Truth.

The Enquirer into the CREDENDA, contained in the Gospel, resembles the Enquirer into the fundamental LAWS of nature, before a better Philosophy had taught us the vanity of System, and inclined us to adopt the humbler Process of Experiment.

We begin our researches in Theology with the assumption of a certain Set of Religious Tenets, and frequently employ the most valuable of those Hours which we destine to sacred Study, in collecting Arguments in their favour, and in vain Endeavours to explain them—while every Text of Scripture is in its turn perverted from its obvious meaning, in order to support them.

How

How much more reasonable previously to investigate, with patience and critical attention, the sense of each particular text or passage, in the natural order of the writer, and to defer the formation of Opinion, until, like a Principle of sound Philosophy, suggested by a numerous train of experiments, it forces itself with accumulated evidence on the yielding mind!

It is solely owing to the preposterous Method of Enquiry, above described, that the Holy Records of our Faith have, very injuriously, been supposed to be so loosely worded, as in fact to countenance opposite opinions, and to justify the most fantastic doctrines.

But let us for a moment reflect—and let the reflection teach us wisdom—that the same Phænomena of Nature, which were brought in evidence of the Figments of remote Antiquity, were also applied to support the equally vain Hypotheses of more modern times. The Laws of the Material World, in consequence of the introduction of a better method of Investigation, are however now demonstrated to be CONSISTENT, SIMPLE, and INVARIABLE, affording a just and easy Explication of every natural appearance. If a similar Process be observed, similar Success may reasonably be expected to be our reward, when we explore the sacred Sources of Religious Truth.

That

That Unity of Sentiment, respecting the leading Truths of Revelation, which is the natural result of a sober and unbiaſſed ſearch, conducted under the Influence of the Chriſtian graces, leads to Unity of RELIGIOUS WORSHIP—and Unity of Worship, thus circumſtanced, to CHRISTIAN PEACE*.

I cloſe theſe Pages with my Letter to my late Dioceſan.

To the Right Rev. the Biſhop of Norwich.

(Copy.)

My Lord,

I Think it proper to give you this previous Information, that I propoſe to reſign the Rectory of Homersfield and Vicarage of Flixton into your Lordſhip's hands upon the 29th or 30th of the preſent month (September.)

As

* In this progreſs, from the Inveſtigation of Scriptural Truth to its final Conſequence, the Eſtabliſhment of Chriſtian Peace, it appears to me to be eſſentially neceſſary, that an open avowal of our Perſuaſion ſhould accompany a change of Sentiment in every inſtance of Importance, more eſpecially in that conſequential article, the Object of Religious Worſhip. And therefore I cannot but highly approve the general Principle, on which Mr. Lindſey's Plan of a reformed Liturgy is founded, as well as that particular Ceremony, which he has given to the Public, and continues to conduct with ſo much propriety and ſucceſs.

As the motives which induce me to embrace this resolution may possibly be misconstrued, it will not I trust be thought impertinent if I state them to your Lordship.

In the first place I think it necessary to assure your Lordship, that, although I esteemed it to be my Duty to take an active part in the late Petition of the Clergy, the Principles maintained in that just Remonstrance do not, in my apprehension, appear to lay me under any Obligation to relinquish my present Station.

The Author of the CONFESSIO^NAL, my Lord, had convinced me of the unlawfulness and inexpediency of requiring a Subscription to Systematic Articles of Faith and Doctrine, from the Teachers of the Gospel in a Protestant Church.

My own Observation in the University of Cambridge further tended to satisfy me with respect to the impropriety of such a requisition: and the visible neglect of the Study of the Scriptures in this age and country seemed in a great measure to be derived from that restraint of the exercise of private Judgment, which is the unavoidable consequence of this unedifying Imposition.

With these convictions it was impossible for me to decline engaging with those distinguished friends
of

of Religious Liberty, who associated for the Purpose of soliciting, for themselves and their Brethren of the Church of England, an Exemption from the obligation of declaring or subscribing their assent to any formulary of doctrine, which should be proposed as explanatory of the Word of God.

It appeared to me to be a sufficient reason for such application, that the doctrines, contained in the 39 articles, being the deductions of frail and fallible men, and expressed in unscriptural terms, were essentially differenced, in point of authority, from those Holy Scriptures, to which we have professed an absolute and unreserved submission as the only Rule of Religious Faith and Practice—and that the requisition of Assent to them was eventually subversive of the Right of private Judgment, a right, on which every Protestant Church was founded, and the exercise of which our own Church in particular, in one of her forms of ordination, not only allows us, but enjoins.

It also appeared evident to me, that the Enquiry, whether or no the 39 articles express the genuine Sense of Scripture, was a question of a very different nature from that, to which the Petitioners invited the attention of their Brethren—that Persons of the most opposite opinions, with respect to the doctrine of the articles, might unite in a declaration, that every attempt to effect an uniformity of
sentiment

sentiment concerning the sense of Scripture, by other means than the force of argument, and rational conviction, was utterly unwarrantable, and bore too striking a resemblance to that Spirit of Intolerance, which forms the distinguishing Character of Antichristian Rome—and, lastly, that many members of our Church might be truly sensible of the inexpediency of requiring this Subscription—might address a competent Tribunal with a view of effecting an Abolition of the Practice, and yet continue to hold and to accept Preferment, without violating the dictates of Conscience, and with great Advantage to the Christian Cause.

My Objections, my Lord, to the accepting and the holding of Preferment in the Church of England, bear no relation to the cause of the Petitioning Clergy—the Reasons which influenced me in the forming of the Resolution, now communicated to your Lordship, are intirely my own.

After the most serious and dispassionate enquiry, I am persuaded, my Lord, from the concurrent testimony of Reason and Revelation, that the SUPREME CAUSE of all things is, not merely in *Essence*, but also in *Person*, ONE.

By the force of the same Evidence I am convinced, that this Almighty Power is the *only* proper Object of Religion.

The Liturgy of the Church of England is obviously founded upon the Idea, that in the Divine Nature is a TRINITY of Persons, to each of which every Species of religious Adoration is addressed, as well as such Powers ascribed, as are the incommunicable Attributes of God.

Under my persuasion of the erroneousness of this doctrine, I cannot any longer with satisfaction to myself officiate in the Established Service : and as I certainly can have no claim to the Emoluments of my Profession, unless I am willing to perform the Duties of it, I therefore resign my Preferment.

But, my Lord, although I find myself under an obligation to relinquish my present station in the Church of England, I do not renounce the Profession of a CHRISTIAN. On the contrary, penetrated by the clearest convictions of the high Importance, and divine Authority of the Gospel, I will labour to promote the advancement of Scriptural Knowledge with increasing zeal ; and will ever be ready to unite, with heart and hand, in any just and legal attempt to remove that Burden of Subscription to Human Formularies, which I esteem one of the most powerful Obstructions to its Progress.

I remain, &c.

